

- Community Safety Partnership
- Sexual Violence Strategy

10th March 2023

- Cover option 2 (add picture behind)
240mmx160mm

Process

- Workshop October 2022 to review progress in drafting
- Good attendance and engagement including from statutory partners; voluntary sector providers and Herefordshire Women's' Equality Group
- Active drafting and re-drafting since then with final agreement reached on 17th Feb
- Clear consensus on the strategy, covering 2023 - 2028
- Action plan will be dynamic and some detail still needed as we move to delivery from April 23
- Actions already being taken forward.

Context (1)

- A rise in reported offences post-Covid compared with pre-Covid
- Significant under-reporting of sexual violence. Estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales 2022 showed that 2.7% of adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced sexual assault in the last year in England and Wales. This would equate to an estimate of **5,049 sexual violence offences** against adults aged 16 to 59 years in Herefordshire **during a one year period**. However, **only 1105 offences** were actually reported for all ages **over a three year period** (April 2019-March 2022).

Context (2)

- On-going issues with data accuracy, eg conflating of violence and sexual violence. However, Herefordshire is above statistical neighbours for this category.
- Sexual violence disproportionately affects women and girls. Approximately 1 in 20 men (5.7%) have experienced sexual assault (including attempts) since age 16, compared to more than 1 in 4 women (27%) (ONS, 2022)
- Perpetrators are overwhelmingly male – nationally 98% of people who report sexual violence say that the perpetrator was male (ONS, 2022)

Context (3)

- Perpetrators of reported offences are frequently not brought to justice. Conviction rate in Herefordshire has dropped significantly in 21/22
- Advocacy and therapeutic interventions can have positive effects on victims' and survivors' well-being and engagement with the criminal justice system. However, awareness of available services is variable amongst victims and survivors and the wider system
- Commissioned support services have capacity restrictions due to budgetary constraint.

Our vision is for a County where everyone lives free of the fear, threat, or experience of sexual violence.

- Our strategy focuses on three priority areas:
- **prioritising prevention,**
- **supporting victims and survivors**
- **pursuing perpetrators.**

In taking this forward we are committed to(1):

- Working together to prevent sexual violence
- Increasing community awareness of sexual violence, challenging victim blaming language and behaviours and believing victims and survivors
- Challenging attitudes that lead to sexual violence (e.g. gender inequality) by working with community settings such as schools and businesses
- Listening to victim and survivor voices to inform development and delivery of services
- Ensuring that all victims and survivors can, and know how to, access specialist support when and where they need it. Lifelong support should be available and responsive to triggering life events.

We are committed to(2):

- Coordinating efforts so that different parts of the service system work together
- Creating care pathways for all victims and survivors regardless of whether or not they report the crimes against them
- Reducing barriers to reporting sexual violence
- Improving support and choice for victims and survivors as they navigate the criminal justice system
- Holding perpetrators to account and providing perpetrator programmes to reduce re-offending.

Prioritising Prevention

- Increase understanding of sexual violence and its drivers
- Challenge attitudes and structures that lead to sexual violence and stop people speaking out
- Strengthen the capacity of educational settings, workplaces, leisure and entertainment venues to prevent sexual violence
- Ensure that families and children are educated about consent, healthy relationships and sexual violence
- Address harmful sexual behaviour in schools

Supporting Victims and Survivors

- Ensure that all services are working from trauma informed perspectives
- Ensure that all victims/survivors of sexual violence are believed and supported to recover
- Ensure that survivors have choice in their support options and that these are timely, integrated and client focused
- Increase the capacity of both specialist SV and mainstream services to be more responsive to the needs of victims/survivors
- Ensure that where sexual harm has happened between children, the victim and others within the setting are protected and supported
- Ensure that children displaying problematic sexual behaviours receive assessments and intervention

Pursuing Perpetrators

- Ensure a multi-agency approach to address barriers preventing victim reporting and engagement with the criminal justice system
- Ensure that changes in all laws pertaining to sexual violence are circulated within multi-agency settings
- Strengthen interventions that help perpetrators take responsibility for their actions and change their attitudes to prevent re-offending

Next steps

- Active management of the action plan
- Reporting into the sub-group
- Remembering that
- **Our vision is for a County where everyone lives free of the fear, threat, or experience of sexual violence.**